

NSC BRIEFING

22 January 1959

JAPAN

- I. Premier Kishi, who for 20 months exercised firm control of govt, in last two months has received series setbacks making his political future uncertain.
 - A. His inept handling of a bill to strengthen police powers began his troubles
 1. Widespread public clamor and strong-arm tactics by the opposition Socialists in the Diet forced him to accept Socialist terms for settlement with a great loss of face.
 - B. Kishi's rivals in the ruling Liberal-Democratic Party seized the opportunity to demand party and cabinet changes to increase their power.
 - C. Three dissident leaders resigned from the cabinet in late December and have been refusing cabinet or party posts unless a sweeping reshuffle is made.
 - D. In early January, former Prime Minister Yoshida advised Kishi to resign.
- II. The cabinet and party executive changes announced on 12 Jan left Kishi with a second team line-up and were only stop-gap action.
 - A. The dissident Liberal-Democrats, who object strongly to Kishi's desire to seek re-election as party president before his term ends on 21 March, have sought time to force further concessions, or failing this, to agree on a candidate to challenge him.

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B. The dissidents earlier this week rejected Kishi's compromise offer to hold party election by Feb.

C. Our embassy reported yesterday that in the last day or two an "atmosphere of detente" had developed and there was "talk of compromise," with Kishi's position improving.

D. Latest report (FBIS) this morning is that agreement has been reached to hold the party election at the party's annual convention this Saturday--as Kishi had originally desired.

1. It remains to be seen what compromises, if any, are involved.

III. Party factionalism is almost certain to continue at least under the surface and to continue to handicap Kishi in carrying out his strongly anti-leftist program.

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